tive from a well known agency. I judged it best to enlist his services: he would have proved useful, supposing this business of the telegram to have been a trap."

The doctor spread his large white hands danglingly, like a seal's flappers. "A trap?" he repeated helplessly. "My dear Madam! You suspected that some designing person or persons unknown might possibly use your husband's name, invent a story of his illness, as a ruse to entrap you?"

"I suspected," returned Mrs. Rosval, "no unknown person. The inventor of the ruse would have been my husband. We separated some years ago by mutual consent. At least, I refused to live with him any longer, and he, knowing what grounds I had for the refusal, was obliged to submit. But he resented my action in the matter." Mrs. Rosval raised her delicate, dark eyebrows with weary disdain, and imparted to her shoulders a mute eloquence of contempt that is not the prerogative of an English-bred woman. "And he has more than once had recourse to what, for want of a better word, I call traps. That is all. Matilda," she addressed the tearful maid, "dry your eyes and tell the people downstairs that I engage this suite of rooms. Two bedrooms, a bathroom, and sitting room at ten guineas a week, I think they said. Horribly expensive, but it cannot be helped. And now, Doctor," she turned again to him, "when do you wish me to see your patient? At once? It shall be at once if you say so. I am completely in your hands."

The doctor, a little staggered by the deftness of his patient's wife in transferring the onus of the situation from her shoulders to his own, absolutely prohibited any suggestion of her entering the sickroom until refreshed and rested. Mrs. Rosval acquiesced, with a repetition of that compromising statement about being completely in his hands, and the doctor took his leave, promising to return later that evening. She gave him her cool fingers, and they parted. He had no sooner reached the door than she called him back.

"I only wanted to ask— Of course you have a library. Does the catalogue of your library include a file of 'The Daily Telegraph'?"

It did, the doctor admitted, the file in question extending some twelve years back.

"Three will do," said Mrs. Rosval, warming one slender, arched foot upon the fender. "Next time you are in want of a little light reading, look in the Law Intelligence, Divorce Division, month of February, 1890, where you will find a case: 'Ffrench v. Ffrench; Rosval cited.' The details will explain a good deal that may appear puzzling to you with regard to the strained relations between Mr. Rosval and myself. Though doctors never allow themselves to be puzzled, do they? *Au revoir.*"

THE doctor had had an unusually busy day of it; but he curtailed his after-dinner nap in order to glance through the Law Intelligence records of the month of February, 1890. There was much in the case to which Mrs. Rosval had referred that went far toward justifying the "strained relations" she had hinted at. And it is the duty of the medical profession to rally at the watery of the outraged proprieties. But, when alone and unobserved, doctors have many points in common with mere men. And as this doctor stepped into his brougham he said, "Women are very hard. In all human probability the man was innocent." He said again, "Women are hard," as he creaked up the hotel staircase.

He found her in the sickroom. She had changed her dress for something that gave out no assertive silken rustle in answer to her movements, something that draped the charming contour of her figure—she had a charming figure—with soft, quiet folds, like the wings of a dun hawkmoth. That fell composure still walled her in as with ramparts of steel. She held the bed curtain back as the doctor stooped over the livid, discolored face upon the pillow. She took a linen cloth from the Sister, and deftly, lightly, wiped away the froth and mucus that had gathered about the cracked and bleeding lips. But the hand that rendered these offices was as steady as though it had been carved out of white marble.

Disturbed from his lethargy by the invasion of candlelight upon his haggard eyelids and the doctor's bass murmur in his ear, the sick man began to talk a little. For the most part it was mere gabble; but some sentences were plain. He moaned piteously for a barber, because he was unshaved. Rosval had always been foolishly vain of his personal appearance. And he damned the one glass of bad water, to the drinking of which he attributed his disease, promising, if he got well, never to drink any more. To do him credit, he had never been addicted to that particular form of liquid refreshment. The doctor inferred as much from his diagnosis, and from the faint, sarcastic quiver of Mrs. Rosval's white lips. Then the tongue of the man ceased wagging; but the burning head began to thresh to and fro upon the pillow, and the clawlike hands to scratch at the bed clothes in a fresh access of the maddening enteric irritation. Alleviating measures proved as effective as alleviating measures generally do prove: the head went on rolling, and the crooked talons continued to tear.

All at once they were quiet. Mrs. Rosval had laid her hand upon the clammy forehead, about as tenderly, to all appearance, as she would have laid it upon the back of a chair. And the man was still. She placed the other hand beside the first. The drawn lines about the nostrils relaxed, the clenched teeth parted, the breast rose and fell with the indrawing and outgoing of a sigh of relief. And the man slept, so soundly that she moved from him presently, without disturbing him, and passed into the room adjoining, where the doctor and the nurse were holding a whispered confabulation.

There would be no need to send in another professional attendant, the Sister said, now that the patient's wife had arrived. She possessed remarkable ability for nursing, and extraordinary self command. She shrank from nothing, not even the most repugnant duties of the sick chamber. The Sister had met in her time with ladies who took things coolly; but this lady really surprised her.

The doctor was in the act of shaking his head,—not from side to side, but up and down,—a gesture that expressed indulgent toleration of the Sister's surprise, while it repudiated the notion of his entertaining any on his own account—when he jumped; for a calm, quiet voice at his elbow said:

"You told me that Mr. Rosval was dangerously ill. Is he dying?"

The nurse had vanished into the carbolic-laden atmosphere of the Chamber of Horrors.

"My dear Madam, your husband is in the hands—" So the doctor was beginning, when the obvious inappropriateness of the stereotyped formula stopped him short. Then he admitted that the condition of the man in the other room was very precarious; that he could not, when not *in articulo mortis*, be said to be dying, but that toward the small hours of the morning he might attain to a pitch of prostration closely allied to that condition; and that nothing could be done for him but to give him milk and medicine regularly, and— The doctor would have ended "and trust in Providence," but for obvious reasons he thought better of it. Then he went away, feeling certain in his own mind that Mrs. Rosval would be a widow before twenty-four hours were over.

THAT woman, meanwhile, returning to the sickroom, had persuaded the fagged nurse to go and lie down. She understood how to do all that was necessary, she whispered, and would call the Sister if any change occurred. Then she sat down at the foot of the bed, and prepared to keep her vigil with unshaken fortitude. The sleeping woman in the next room breathed heavily, the sounds of rolling wheels and jarring voices grew less and less; then all fell quiet. About three hours before dawn the sleeper awakened. The hollow eyes no longer turned on her with the blind, glassy stare of delirium. There was reason in Rosval's look, and memory.

He seemed to beckon, and she came near. She had to stoop to catch the moaning whisper that asked:

"How—did you—come here?"

She answered steadily, "They sent for me."

"They'd not have—if I had known!" Rosval gasped.

"If I annoy you," said Mrs. Rosval with icy tolerance, "I can go."

She turned, meaning to call the nurse; but a clawlike hand went weakly out and caught at her skirts. The grasp was no stronger than that of a newborn child; but, just for that it was so feeble, it held her.

"You'll not go! Three years—you've treated me—like a leper! Never would—listen to what I'll get to say! But now! I tell you she—sat on—my knee and—kissed me—before I knew it—and then—the husband came in. A plant, by God!"

Mrs. Rosval said, "You must not talk. The doctor says you are not to talk," and busied herself with the bottles and glasses that occupied a little stand near the bedside.

Rosval condemned the doctor. Mrs. Rosval measured out his medicine, raised his head with professional skill, and offered him the glass. He clenched his teeth, and defied her with gaunt eyes across the brim.

"No. No milk—no doctor's stuff. I'm been going to the devil—for three years past," proclaimed the sufferer feebly. "Why not go—at once—and have done with it?" Then he fell back heavily on the pillow.

Mrs. Rosval summoned the nurse. The nurse could do nothing; for the moribund was obstinate, and every fresh manifestation of obduracy drove not one, but half a gross of nails into his coffin. That casket was fast progressing toward completion when Mrs. Rosval conceived a desperate idea. The execution of it cost her a severe struggle. Stooping down, she whispered to the sinking man:

"Jack!"

His faded eyes rolled in their sunken sockets until they rested on her. He said with difficulty, "Well?"

"What will make you take it?"

Something like a gleam of cunning came into the face. The answer came, "Kiss me."

She battled with herself for a moment silently, and then, bending closer, touched his forehead with her lips.

"That isn't all. You must say, 'I forgive you.'"

"I can't."

"All right, then."

Silence ensued. The angles of the features were grown

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"She cast a glance of scorn at her own reflection."